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ABSTRACT

Employers of occupational program graduates from Prince George's Community College (PGCC) are surveyed biennially to assess program effectiveness. In order for his/her employer to be included in the study sample, a graduate must have graduated from an occupational program, be employed full time at the time of the survey, hold a job directly or somewhat related to their college training, and have given researchers permission to survey his/her employer. In 1987, supervisors of 90 occupational graduates from the class of 1986 were surveyed to determine their perceptions of the graduates' preparation for employment. Study findings, based on a 48% response rate, included the following: (1) 95% rated the graduates' overall preparation as "very good" or "good"; (2) similarly high ratings were given to graduates' knowledge of specific technical job skills, ability to learn on the job, ability to solve job-related problems, oral communication skills, writing skills, and attitude toward work; (3) nearly 20% of the employers rated graduates' familiarity with equipment as "fair," "poor," or "very poor; and (4) only one employer said s/he would not hire another PGCC graduate of the same program. Data from the 1980, 1982, 1984 and 1986 graduate employer surveys show that PGCC graduates' employment preparation rated higher than the statewide average for community colleges in three of the four surveys. The survey cover letter and questionnaire are appended. (AJL)

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EMPLOYER EVALUATIONS OF PGCC GRADUATES

PRINCE GEORGE'S
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Office of Institutional Research and Analysis

Research Brief RB89-1
September 1988

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PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Office of Institutional Research and Analysis

EMPLOYER EVALUATIONS OF GRADUATES
Research Brief 89-1
September 1988

Introduction

A primary purpose of the occupational programs offered by the college is to prepare graduates for immediate employment. In addition to learning from the graduates their employment experiences and their assessment of PGCC's programs in preparing them for employment, feedback from their employers is considered essential for effective evaluation. Those employers who directly supervise the college's graduates are in a good position to help the college evaluate how well its programs prepare students for the real world of work.

Methodology

Employers of occupational program graduates are surveyed every two years as a part of the biennial graduate follow-up surveys conducted jointly by the Maryland Community College Research Group and the Maryland State Board for Community Colleges. Graduates are surveyed the April following their year of graduation; employers of selected graduates are surveyed during May. Findings from the last four employer surveys (supervisors of 1980, 1982, 1984, and 1986 graduates) are reported below.

The employers who responded to these four mail surveys represent only a fraction of the employers of students who attended or graduated from the community college. Since these surveys are the second stage of a graduate follow-up, employers of the many current and former students who did not graduate from the community college are not included. In order to be included in the samples used in these surveys, a graduate must (1) have graduated from an occupational program at the community college, (2) have been employed full-time at the time of the survey, (3) have been employed in a job directly or somewhat related to his or her college program, and (4) have given the researchers permission to contact his or her employer. Thus, employers of graduates from transfer-oriented programs, those working in jobs in fields different from their college program, those working part-time, or those who did not give permission are excluded. These sampling restrictions, designed to ensure a fair evaluation, greatly reduce the number of employers surveyed. Response rates to these surveys have ranged from 32 to 89 percent across the state, which, when combined with the sample

limitations, have yielded considerable variability in the number of employers responding each year. The number of respondents for the 1980, 1982, 1984, and 1986 graduate employer surveys for PGCC and peer colleges were as follows:

Number of Employer Respondents
MCCRG/SBCC Biennial Surveys of Graduate Employers

	1980	1982	1984	1986
Prince George's Comm. College	90	72	104	43
Anne Arundel Comm. College	69	80	52	52
Catonsville Community College	41	77	48	68
Essex Community College	50	79	55	46
Montgomery Comm. College	111	69	49	83
All Maryland comm. colleges	688	743	670	601

The small number of respondents precludes program-level analysis at each college. Analysis of the statewide aggregates has found some small, though consistent, program differences. For example, employers of health services program graduates have rated them somewhat less well prepared than employers rating graduates from other program areas. Since the mix of programs being evaluated varies across colleges and across time at each college (due to differences in program offerings, graduate totals, and response rates), inter-institutional and time series comparisons can be problematic. Some of the fluctuation in aggregate results may reflect changing proportions in program responses. Despite this potential difficulty, these survey data provide valuable feedback from the employer perspective. In addition to the statistical information reported below, the surveys elicit written comments from employers suggesting ways the college's programs can be improved. All comments are forwarded to the appropriate academic administrator, providing input complementary to that provided by the advisory committees associated with each occupational program.

Most Recent Outcomes Indicators

The most recent employer survey was conducted during May 1987. Supervisors of 90 occupational program graduates from the class of 1986 were mailed questionnaires; 43 responded for a response rate of 48 percent. Forty-one of the 43 respondents (95 percent) rated the graduates' overall community college preparation for employment "very good" or "good." The other two gave "fair" ratings. Employers also rated their PGCC graduate employees on seven more specific attributes using the same five-

point scale. The findings were similarly positive; the only area of concern was familiarity with equipment required on the job, with nearly one in five employers rating the graduates fair, poor, or very poor in cases where the question applied. The responses were distributed as follows for the 1986 graduates:

Employer Ratings of PGCC Graduates' Job Preparation
Supervisors of FY86 Graduates (N = 43)

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	No Opinion
Knowledge of specific technical job skills	14	22	5	0	1	1
Familiarity with job equipment	13	18	5	1	1	5
Ability to learn on the job	25	15	3	0	0	0
Ability to solve job-related problems	19	17	7	0	0	0
Oral communications skills	21	14	6	0	0	2
Writing skills	17	15	9	0	1	1
Attitude toward work	25	15	2	0	0	1

Perhaps the "bottom-line" question is whether the employers would hire another PGCC graduate of the same program. Only one employer said no. Acknowledging the limited number of respondents, it appears that the overall picture from this latest survey is one of employer satisfaction with the job performance of PGCC occupational program graduates.

Time Series and Peer College Comparisons

To put these most recent findings into perspective, PGCC data from the 1980, 1982, 1984, and 1986 graduate employer surveys were compared to four peer colleges and the statewide community college averages. PGCC's graduates' overall job preparation was rated higher than the statewide average for all 17 Maryland community colleges in three of the four surveys:

Employer Rating of Graduate Overall Job Preparation
Percent Rated Very Good or Good on Five Point Scale
Peer College Comparison

	1980	1982	1984	1986
Prince George's Comm. College	89%	95%	81%	95%
Anne Arundel Comm. College	78%	96%	96%	94%
Catonsville Community College	90	93	87	91
Essex Community College	88	84	85	86
Montgomery Comm. College	84	91	91	87
All Maryland comm. colleges	87%	89%	89%	90%

The graduates' technical job skills and knowledge have been rated as follows:

Employer Rating of Graduate Technical Job Skills and Knowledge
Percent Rated Very Good or Good on Five Point Scale
Peer College Comparison

	1980	1982	1984	1986
Prince George's Comm. College	83%	93%	81%	84%
Anne Arundel Comm. College	81%	95%	88%	85%
Catonsville Community College	95	89	89	77
Essex Community College	96	82	87	85
Montgomery Comm. College	82	85	94	78
All Maryland comm. colleges	86%	86%	89%	82%

Comparative ratings of work attitude have been more consistent:

Employer Rating of Graduate Work Attitude
Percent Rated Very Good or Good on Five Point Scale
Peer College Comparison

	1980	1982	1984	1986
Prince George's Comm. College	92%	93%	94%	93%
Anne Arundel Comm. College	92%	96%	98%	91%
Catonsville Community College	95	95	89	90
Essex Community College	92	87	84	89
Montgomery Comm. College	88	93	89	86
All Maryland comm. colleges	90%	90%	90%	89%

Summary

Employers of graduates from PGCC occupational programs have reported satisfaction with their employees' community college preparation. In the most recent survey, 95 percent of the employers rated the overall preparation for employment of the college's graduates as very good or good on a five point scale. Ratings on seven specific job performance attributes were generally very positive. Comparisons over time and with peer institutions support the conclusion that the college's occupational programs are doing a good job providing graduates with job preparation meeting the needs of local employers.

Craig A. Clagett
Director
Institutional Research and Analysis

APPENDIX

I. Survey cover letter.....6

II. Questionnaire.....7

PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Office of the President

May 20, 1987

Dear Supervisor:

Prince George's Community College is conducting an employer survey for the purpose of evaluating its instructional programs. As the supervisor of a graduate of one of these programs, you are in a good position to help us evaluate the effectiveness of our program in preparing students for employment in "real world" jobs. We want our college programs to meet your needs.

We hope you will assist us by taking a few minutes to complete the enclosed employer questionnaire. The graduate provided the college with your name and gave us permission to contact you for the purpose of participating in this survey. Your cooperation in completing the questionnaire will be greatly appreciated, and your suggestions will be forwarded to the appropriate people on campus. In addition, the data gathered by this college are forwarded to the State Board for Community Colleges in Annapolis. The findings help inform state officials about the performance of Maryland's community colleges.

Item F, concerning additional skills desirable in our graduates, permits you to suggest specific program improvements for our consideration. If you have questions about any part of this survey, please call our Director of Institutional Research and Analysis, Craig A. Clagett, at 322-0723.

We would appreciate receiving your response within two weeks if possible. A postage-paid envelope is enclosed. Many thanks for your participation.

Very truly yours,

Robert I. Bickford

Robert I. Bickford
President

301 Largo Road, Largo, Maryland 20772
(301) 322-0400

EMPLOYER QUESTIONNAIRE

Maryland Community Colleges

The purpose of this survey is to help improve instructional programs at each community college. It is used by the community colleges and the State Board for Community Colleges to strengthen these programs. We need you, an employer of one of our recent graduates, to tell us how well the graduate is performing on the job and to evaluate how well this graduate was prepared by the community college for your job.

o o

_____
Name of Graduate

_____
Graduate's Job Title

_____
Program of Study at Community College

o o

A. Community college graduates enter a variety of careers. Based upon your knowledge, is the employee's community college program related to the employee's current job?

[ ] Yes, education closely matched job requirements

[ ] In somewhat related field; education covered most job requirements

[ ] No, in different field; education did not cover most entry job requirements

[ ] I don't know

B. Compared to other entering employees, how well do you feel the community college **prepared** the graduate in the areas listed below?

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	No Opinion
1. Knowledge of specific technical job skills	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2. Familiarity with equipment required by job	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3. Ability to learn on the job	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4. Writing skills	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5. Oral communication skills	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6. Attitude toward work	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7. Ability to solve problems related to job	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

C. Overall, how well prepared is this community college graduate?

Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	No Opinion
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

D. Would you hire another graduate of this community college program?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No Why? _____

E. Would you recommend that other employers hire a graduate of this program?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No Why? _____

F. Please specify any additional skills or areas of knowledge that you feel a community college graduate should have in order to qualify for your jobs.

_____

_____

_____

_____

G. Please describe how this community college can better help you with the training of future employees. _____

_____

H. May we contact you for further help?

		Yes	No
1.	Serving on Program Advisory Committee?	[ ]	[ ]
2.	Placement of student interns?	[ ]	[ ]
3.	Job placement of graduates?	[ ]	[ ]

Supervisor completing this survey:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company/Organization: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

THANK YOU!

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
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